



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DILLMANN ON THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION.

By PROFESSOR FRANCIS B. DENIO, D.D.,
Bangor Theological Seminary.

IN the recently published *Old Testament Theology*¹ of Dr. Dillmann, pages 25-74 are given to a preparatory discussion of the nature and character of the Old Testament religion, of which the following is a sketch.

1. Recognizing that every religion has its fundamental thought which is clearly stamped on all its parts, the question is raised, What is this fundamental thought in the Old Testament religion? The opinion that it is the unity of God is set aside, also the idea that it is the divine majesty. The holiness of God is the idea sought. It is more fundamental than that of unity, or that of majesty. In fact, it is the basis for both these conceptions, and it is the only one of the three ideas which forms an ethical basis for the relations between God and man ("Ye shall be holy, for I am holy"). It is also the only conception which secures a basis for moral freedom in God, and which permits such freedom on the part of man. God in revealing his activity as holy and sanctifying, necessitates human freedom. The Old Testament religion in giving this idea of holiness which brings freedom also secures an historical development of the relation between God and man.

2. From this fundamental idea is derived a multitude of views, conceptions, and teachings which are peculiar to this religion in contrast with all others, and which came into human knowledge only in the course of a long historical development.

The sharpest contrast appears in the idea of God himself, a being not created, not limited by space or time, without form or

¹ *Handbuch der Alttestamentlichen Theologie*, von August Dillmann. Aus dem Nachlass des Verfassers. Herausgegeben von Rudolf Kittel. Leipzig, S. Hirzel, 1895.

image, without multiplicity or limitation, not bound to nature or bound by the powers of nature, but rather he is free and the master of the entire visible nature. All this gives monotheism. The freedom of the visible world and mastery of it, nothing of which exists apart from his will, gives a doctrine of creation in the full sense, and accident and fate are alike excluded.

The idea of the divine holiness yields yet greater results, for it brings to light the real character of evil in human history as being sin. Hence it gives the profoundly ethical view of nature and human history as a peculiar characteristic of this religion, and as one which formed its inner life.

The idea of holiness, therefore, hovers before man as the standard for his life, and it dominates the relation between God and man as an ideal which was to become actual.

This proper relation between God and man became actual through the instrumentality of historic facts. At the outset this relation was in the form of law which concerned outward conduct; that is, it existed as legal obligation. It had an educative force leading from the recognition of the obligations concerning matters in the outward life to those which belonged to the inner life. The relation between God and man thus expressed in the form of legal obligation was fundamentally ethical, and was, therefore, adapted to the entire human race from the beginning. In God's choice to secure human holiness lay the necessity to limit to the nation Israel the historical manifestation of his relationship to mankind and to do this by means of a covenant in which was a legal element.

3. The relationship of the Old Testament religion to that of the New Testament is close in the most important particulars. The fundamental conception of God is the same in both, and the law is recognized in both as the expression of his holy will. The redemptive aim is the same in both, namely, that of securing the holiness of men because God is holy; this goal of the Old Testament is to be secured through the power manifested in the New Testament. In this likeness the two stages of development have distinct characteristics which must be recognized.

4. The relation of the Old Testament to heathenism. Every-

where in the Old Testament its religion is set in sharp antagonism to every form of heathenism with which it comes into contact. Nowhere in heathenism are the ideas of God set free from the ideas of nature in which their deities originated, while in the Old Testament God is free from nature and the Creator of it. Those religions originated in prehistoric times and are local or racial, not ethical; while the Old Testament religion was established by means of definite historical facts (or, it might be said, revelations of God) and by definite historical persons, and is preëminently ethical. In the nature religions the deep idea of moral evil as sin is lacking; it appears as a natural imperfection coinciding with natural evil.

On the other hand, in many secondary points there is similarity between the Old Testament religion and heathenism, where it differs from the New Testament. Among these are the limitation of the religion to only one people, the prescriptions concerning outer conduct, the modes of worship confined to one temple, the sacrificial offerings, the dwelling of the deity in the temple. Also are to be noted the allowance of many usages, as slavery, polygamy, blood revenge and a crude morality. The historical development of the Old Testament religion was a steady progress departing more and more from all these secondary likenesses to heathenism by virtue of its fundamental unlikeness.

5. How is the origin of the Old Testament religion to be explained? It is not possible to explain it as the development of the monotheistic conception, whether regarded as a relic of primeval revelation derived from Egyptian theology or from any other source. The fundamental thought of Mosaic religion is more profound than mere monotheism.

It is not a stage of development intermediate between the nature religions and Christianity. Historical evidence fails to support this theory, and this theory fails to explain the Old Testament conception of the divine holiness. Moreover, the development of this conception, becoming most powerful when the national life was hastening to its downfall, is not explained on the theory of the intermediate character of the religion.

Nor can it be explained as the result of the religious tendencies in the race of Israel. The history of the race shows that neither the Semites in general, nor Israel in particular, had any natural tendencies toward monotheism, to say nothing of ethical monotheism.

The conclusion is that another factor must be added in order to explain the facts, and that is revelation, the historical self-attestation of God.

6. How are we to think of the beginning and course of revelation? This revelation was special and for the establishment of religion. Religion is not knowledge, but it presupposes ideas of God more or less clear, and these ideas, when trustworthy, come from the direct influence of God. Revelation is essentially for founding and organizing religion. All religion rests upon the fact that God takes hold of the human soul—upon a revelation in the wide sense; not alone in the biblical religions, but also in heathen religions so far as there was real religiousness in them. The task of revelation is nothing else than to bring religion into existence. The object and contents of revelation concern only God, divine things, divine truths, and the relation of God and man.

The experience of God manifesting himself to man is a presupposition of the formation of an idea of God. This formation of the idea of God is a long historical process, a series of phenomena through which something became manifest concerning God, and belongs to high antiquity. Revelation is not itself an end, it is a means to an end, namely, the establishment of religion; it comes to men prepared to receive it, and at periods for which providential preparation had been made.

The signs or marks by which revelation is to be known are: (1) It is for founding religion and is something new at least to him who receives it. (2) It is developed historically, disclosing first of all and in individual instances what in that given instance is the divine will, the necessary divine truth. (3) It is peculiar to antiquity. (4) It is brought about by the instrumentality of particular men, and by acts of revelation on God's part. (5) It gives knowledge which is actually new, and operates with divine authority, convincingly and imperatively pro-

ducing immediate certainty and a firm conviction on the part of him who receives it, such as can never come from speculation, and which experience alone produces by operating on the human spirit with purifying and exalting power. The three latter signs are the chief tests whether the revelations actually have a higher source; the others must be used for putting to test that which is given in experience.

7. Why did this revelation come to fruition in Israel alone? Heathenism is not wholly bereft of revelation of God, but its revelation did not go on to completion as in Israel. There is no standing still in human relations with God. If there be no progress then there is depravation by reason of failure to struggle for the mastery of the tendencies to error. In this sense there was a primeval revelation if it be understood to mean a stage of development preceding the sinking.

In Israel, on the other hand, there was a development from incompleteness toward completeness; away from error and perversion toward the right and perfect. A people was selected long after the careers of the civilized races of antiquity had begun, within the light of history, a race of nomads simple in faith and life. By wonderful deeds of God they were torn loose from a great civilized race; under the leading of a great man who had received divine revelations, and of religious heroes, under the impulse of manifold providences, and by the use of the means of revelation and by the fruits of revelation their history was made unique and diverse from that of the nations.

The progress of this religious life was such as to prepare for Christianity which became its matured fruit, the universal religion for which the Old Testament religion was the preparation, and which is the proof of the sanctifying power of the Old Testament religion itself.

If this sketch is not too imperfect, it hints plainly the uncommon value of the full discussion, and should tempt those who can to read it for themselves. It is to be hoped that the entire volume will be translated, and that at no late day. Any needless delay will be a loss to those readers who must wait until it can appear in English.